

PASTORPEDIA™

Cutting Edge Conversations for Pastors and Church Leaders

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Leadership: easy weaknesses to slide into:

“And now, that great servant of God...”

Drum roll. Then, from the announcer for the television show, the phrase above. Loud and clear.

The preacher probably wrote it himself. Or maybe, when his publicity person proposed it, he did an, “Aw shucks, we maybe should not say that...but then I do....”

Somehow he missed the incongruity of linking “great” and “servant.”

“He believed his own press release,” was the analysis once given for a “U.S. tv prophet” who fell off a moral cliff in front of our nation.

And it can happen in any size crowd or church.

So let’s stay candid here with three questions about the temptations that go with being up front. And please do not hope the warnings are forwarded to “the mega-church leaders” who make the front page when they stumble. Our Lord reads the small print on the back pages also. And so do our families and our people.

*Ditching the drum rolls,
Knut, Jeff, Jim*

Are there any that go with the position?

Jeff Bogue

Absolutely!

- Pride.
- Resting on your laurels.
- Abusing people's trust so we become lazy in communicating, organizing, or investing our time.

Jim Brown

- Displaced and assumed power after many years of serving.
- Lack of accountability.
- Lack of growth and unwillingness to learn new things.
- Over-protection of ministries that you have birthed.
- Pride that gets in the way of teachable spirit.
- An entitlement spirit that creeps up and drives a self-centered ego.
- A positional leader's mentality that makes you believe people really want to follow you.
- Relying too much on your own abilities instead of leading from the Spirit's direction and a lifestyle of prayer.

Knute Larson

- Yes. The weakness of self. We already take ourselves too seriously, and then when others do that in front of us or tell us how powerful our sermon was, or say how much our thoughts mean to them—well, you know what I mean—it can really pump up our egos. And it can get you thinking maybe they are right, and maybe we do deserve jumping ahead in the line...
- Yes. In some places there is little accountability for the pastor unless he imposes it on himself. Some show no one their schedule. Others easily skip creating evangelistic challenges. Some allow staff or lead volunteers to roam wherever they wish in ministry, with little in the way of development.
- Yes. Any position that lifts you up higher than others can get you thinking that maybe you are.
- We must create our own systems of accountability, report to the oversight board, stay close to our Lord and also to a few well-chosen accountability partners who are tough and show no pastor privilege to us. We must walk closely with our Lord.

Must a leader be strong enough to stand alone?

Jeff Bogue

- 100%. If something is right it's right and if it's wrong it's wrong, and we must be strong enough to stand alone in what we believe.

- Ideally, if you have led well, you will not find yourself alone and there will be other men and women who will stand with you.

Jim Brown

- Yes. There are times when you hear from the Lord as the Shepherd of your people and must take a stand even if there is some opposition.
- We must be willing to please God, not leading from a posture of trying to please man alone.
- The way you become strong is by walking in the power of God and humbly submitting your will to Him.
- People look to their pastor for leadership in hard times—don't be afraid to lead them!

Knute Larson

- Yes. We must have the inner strength—think Holy Spirit, Christ in you—to stand alone, to walk past temptation, to refer someone you are counseling to another because you are feeling too close, to adopt “guard rails” for yourself and all staff and leadership, and to build accountability relations that challenge you and would call you out for sure so you are not standing so very alone.
- Yes. We all frown on political leaders who exchange favors so both of them can put “pork” into a bill—even so we must act and lead by Scripture and moral conviction even if the church's tribal chief will scold us or withdraw support if we go against him.
- Yes, but the fact is you can become a leader in the church without having spiritual backbone or a record of servant-like ministry. So some people in the pulpit or on a church board may have been voted in because of a bloc of the founders of the church, with little note of wisdom or spiritual strength. And I still love and give a lot of my time to the local church, and see so much good also.
- Yes, and God's Spirit is amazing in His inner strength and mysterious moves that bring about so many good things. Take it from a veteran of many scary meetings, many words mixed with feelings that I had no right to be the decision-maker or leader, and many prayers motivated by fear as much as trust. You do not have to be a muscle man or spiritual giant to receive grace for the daily strength for the meeting and even the confrontation. And ours is not to “stand alone” in the true sense of the phrase—we live “in combination” with the Savior we trust, for His Holy Spirit is with us and in us.

Are some of the weaknesses easily blind spots for us?

Jeff Bogue

- I believe so. The longer you lead, the more you tend to slip into your strengths and become clueless about your weaknesses because they're not put in front of you as much.
- You can overcome weaknesses with talent or by simply the fact that no one will tell you about them. It's the idea that no one will tell you your hair is messed up or your collar's out or your zipper's down. People can become intimidated to interact with you, so you must surround yourself with those who are honest—not critical, but honest with you!

Jim Brown

- Yes, and that is why we need someone we trust speaking truthfully into our life about our weaknesses.
- Sin causes blind spots in our lives and closes our ears to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.
- We are prone to believe more highly of ourselves when success happens around us.

Knute Larson

- Yes, for sure some of them are. It is so easy to give yourself too much credit in the church or even in the spiritual battles of the soul. Because other people hear what we say and even take notes on a lot of it, we can think we must really know how to live this Christian life. And that just may be the worst of life's blind spots, when we think we can stand alone in any temptation.
- Yes, in that sometimes your best friends will not tell you if you are coming off proud, or talk about yourself too much (and according to Scripture most talking about self is wrong), or doing a "That's nothin'" every time someone else tells a story—you know, "Topper" from the cartoon strip, who always has a better idea or story!
- One of the responsibilities of a wife or a fellow pastor or an accountability partner is to reveal blind spots of course.
- Yes, and part of Christian growth is the unveiling and admission of blind spots, and getting them cured!

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